

From: ["Bryan, David" </O=EXCHANGELABS/OU=EXCHANGE ADMINISTRATIVE:GROUP \(FYDIBOHF23SPDLT\)/CN=RECIPIENTS/CN=DE67FD66319E475AA76B7FB0C64D64B5-BRYAN.DAVID>](mailto:Bryan.David@EXCHANGELABS/OU=EXCHANGE ADMINISTRATIVE:GROUP (FYDIBOHF23SPDLT)/CN=RECIPIENTS/CN=DE67FD66319E475AA76B7FB0C64D64B5-BRYAN.DAVID)
To: ["R7 Senior" <Staff>](#)
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Bridgeton Landfill: One Step Closer to Not Smelling Horrible, Stopping Underground Fire

By Sam Levin

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http://blogs.riverfronttimes.com/dailyrft/2013/06/bridgeton_landfill_pipe_removal.php

The smelly landfill in Bridgeton is one step closer to not being so smelly! And not on fire!

The Missouri attorney general's office -- which has sued the company behind Bridgeton Landfill -- announced yesterday that workers at the trash site have finished removing the six "reinforced concrete pipes" that were apparently contributing to the awful stench and the "underground smoldering" that activists say is particularly worrisome.

"While this is an encouraging first step toward controlling the odor and stabilizing the landfill, there remains a great deal of work left to do," Koster says in a statement.

As we've reported, the Bridgeton Landfill, and its parent company, Republic Services, have made headlines for months due to a persistently awful stench tied to some sort of underground heat reaction that inspired an investigative Rolling Stone feature in May titled "St. Louis Is Burning."

Besides the discomfort of living near a bad odor, the problems at Bridgeton Landfill have raised the ire of environmental activists, who point out that the underground fire is pretty close to another landfill that has radioactive waste on site.

Last week, the Environmental Protection Agency said that there are no health risks at this adjacent landfill which does continue to have known levels of radioactive material.

Meanwhile, it appears that the landfill company has successfully finished a major step in its smell-reducing plan. The removal of these pipes -- which should help eliminate the terrible odors going forward -- may temporarily made the smell worse, which is why Republic Services offered alternative housing for some around the landfill over the past few weeks.

This initiative is part of a preliminary injunction approved by the St. Louis county circuit court last month through Koster's suit.

Next, Republic Services will work to install a "permanent landfill cap," aimed at ending the foul odors altogether. The goal is for completion by Labor Day, Koster says.

The state's lawsuit against Republic is pending as the agreed-upon remediation plan continues.

Here's Koster's full news release followed by Bridgeton's latest update.

Attorney General Koster announces completion of RCP abandonment at Bridgeton Landfill

--completion is significant step in project to lessen odors at the landfill--

Jefferson City, Mo. - Attorney General Chris Koster announced today that Republic Services of Bridgeton has completed the abandonment of the six Reinforced Concrete Pipes (RCPs) identified as contributing to both the odor experienced by area residents as well as the underground smoldering at the site. Pursuant to an agreed order of preliminary injunction approved by the Circuit Court of St. Louis County on May 14, Republic removed the RCPs to facilitate the installation of a permanent landfill cap.

The RCP-abandonment phase of the remediation project began on May 22 and wrapped on June 3. Republic expects to have the permanent cap in-place by Labor Day. Throughout the RCP abandonment residents within one mile of the site were offered paid accommodations.

"While this is an encouraging first step toward controlling the odor and stabilizing the landfill, there remains a great deal of work left to do," Koster said. "We will continue to vigilantly monitor the site as work progresses."

The Attorney General visited the Bridgeton Landfill the evening of May 22 to receive a progress report from officials from Republic and state experts. Koster was on-hand to observe the completion of the work on the first RCP and to receive a status briefing from engineers. He has remained in regular contact with Republic and state engineers to ensure the terms of the agreement are being met.

The state's lawsuit against landfill operators remains pending as the agreed-upon remediation and monitoring announced by Koster on May 14 moves ahead.

From Republic Services:

BRIDGETON, MO (June 3, 2013) - The sixth and final RCP, LCS-1, was successfully abandoned today. Bridgeton Landfill, LLC appreciates the patience of its neighbors during this phase of the improvement project. The next phase, the installation of the Ethylene Vinyl Alcohol (EVOH) capping system, has already begun.